

Imee Marcos seeks law vs. 'misappropriation of cultural heritage' after Whang-Od, Nas Daily controversy

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Senator Imee Marcos on Thursday renewed her call to pass a law that will protect the indigenous peoples (IP) from “misappropriation of cultural heritage” after the controversy involving vlogger Nuseir Yassin and Kalinga tattoo artist Apo Whang-Od.

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Marcos, who chairs the Senate committee on cultural communities, underscored the need for cultural sensitivity to IPs, especially in cases where profit and self-promotion are involved.

“The problem is we have no legal definition of what constitute cultural misappropriation. Until we do, our IPs will remain exposed to continual exploitation,” Marcos said.

“Indigenous people have felt misrepresented, even robbed of their customs, traditions, and forms of expression which have spiritual value, but are treated by city folk as mere objects of aesthetic appreciation or potential commodities,” she added.

The lawmaker noted that it is not the first time that Whang-Od was involved in such controversy, citing a previous instance involving the Philippine unit of an American headwear company.

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She cited another incident involving a fashion brand that used the Kankana-ey of the Cordillera Administrative Region, Yakan of Basilan, and the Manobo of Northern Mindanao as the names for their footwear designs.

Apart from this, the lawmaker said the T'boli community in southwestern Mindanao had also been offended by the use of their sacred and spiritual cloth T'nalak textile for shoes.

With these incidents, Marcos filed Senate Resolution 517 in September 2020 which calls for an inquiry to craft a law that will "substantially reduce, if not totally eradicate, misappropriation of indigenous cultural heritage and will promote responsible branding, labeling, manufacturing, purchasing, and wearing of indigenous textiles and other products inspired by indigenous peoples' cultural heritage."

"We need a new [Intellectual Property Office] framework allowing firstly communal intellectual property, and not merely individual IP ownership. Further, indigenous peoples must own these cultural assets in perpetuity, not for a mere period of time as presently stated in our intellectual property laws," Marcos said.

The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) - Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) said the supposed signing of contract

between Whang-Od with the Palestinian-Israeli vlogger will be [investigated](#) following allegations of exploitation.

The online learning platform Nas Academy [took down](#) one of its offered courses featuring Whang-od, who was from the Butbut tribe in Kalinga, after it was called a “scam” by the latter’s niece.

Nas Daily has [responded to allegations](#), saying the tattoo artist has signed a contract using her thumb print.—AOL, **GMA News**